



Short communication

Descriptive report of a team-taught elective academic-focused advanced pharmacy practice experience

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Abstract

Objectives: To describe the development of a team-taught academic-focused advanced pharmacy practice experience (APPE).

Methods: This APPE was developed as a way to expose students to academic pharmacy while accommodating increasing faculty APPE student teaching loads. The academic-focused APPE integrated weekly live didactic seminars with an online learning component. Using synchronous distance learning technology, the academic-focused APPE was simultaneously delivered between two separate education campuses.

Results: A total of 13 students and eight faculty participated during the first offering (Fall 2011) of this six-week academic-focused APPE. Surveys were administered to both the students and faculty at the completion of the APPE. Both, students and faculty rated many of the specific assignments and activities favorably and perceived the rotation favorably overall.

Conclusions: The combination of a shared pharmacy practice faculty workload and a positive learning experience for the students demonstrates that this team-taught approach is an effective means of offering an academic-focused APPE rotation.

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Introduction/background

The future of the pharmacy profession lies not only in its ability to prepare students to be competent practitioners but also in its ability to identify, mentor, and recruit strong candidates to faculty positions. As such, faculty and administrative personnel in Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) programs have responsibilities to facilitate teaching competence, to provide opportunities for students to integrate concepts related to teaching and pharmacy practice, and to develop future pharmacy educators. This is a charge that has been recognized by the American Association of Colleges

of Pharmacy (AACP) and was addressed by a 2005 AACP Academic Affairs Committee report.¹ In response to a pharmacy faculty shortage and the expansion of pharmacy student programs and enrollments, this report explored how AACP and schools of pharmacy could foster interest in academic careers. A component of this plan included schools of pharmacy attracting PharmD students to careers in academia by enhancing their preparation for such a career. Further supporting the need for increased student exposure to academia was a 2011–2012 AACP survey of 116 schools and colleges of pharmacy that reported a total of 412 vacant and/or lost faculty positions, 53.2% of which were in clinical science/pharmacy practice.² This represents an increase of 9.0% over 2010–2011 faculty vacancy data. As the number of pharmacy schools increases—129 colleges and schools offered the PharmD as a first professional degree and 11 colleges and schools offered the PharmD as a

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post-Bachelor of Science degree in Fall 2013³—the need for pharmacy faculty will continue to grow. A number of initiatives intended to stimulate student interest in pharmacy-related academia, including the offering of an elective course or elective academic advanced pharmacy practice experiences (APPEs), have been previously described.^{4–10} In these reports, elective academic APPEs were precepted by one or two faculty and typically involved a small number of students (one or two) per rotation. In addition, these reports suggest that offering APPEs in pharmacy academia may encourage students to pursue teaching and/or faculty positions.

The APPE described in this report includes a larger student cohort, in which course development and teaching was shared among eight pharmacy practice faculty members. To our knowledge, this is the largest faculty collaboration recorded for an academic-focused APPE. In addition to incorporating opportunities for students to further develop their communication, critical thinking, and problem solving skills, the development of this academic APPE elective supports the 2011 Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) Standards and Guidelines that focus on the development of elective APPEs that allow students “to expand their understanding of professional opportunities.”¹¹

Our program is a year-round, 34-month, accelerated PharmD program that represents the final four professional years of the traditional six-year PharmD program.¹² The university’s main and satellite campuses are linked using technology that allows for the synchronous sharing of audio and visual information in the classroom. Since the inception of our program, the incoming class size has increased from approximately 100 students on the main campus in the year 2000 to 329 students on two campuses in 2012. As a direct result of this increase in enrollment, the APPE teaching load for each faculty member in the Department of Pharmacy Practice has increased over time. The development of a team-taught elective academic-focused APPE described in this report has helped faculty increase the exposure of PharmD students to aspects of pharmacy academia while accommodating increased APPE student loads.

Rationale and objectives

The development of this APPE was identified as a way to (1) accommodate an increase in the number of students requiring APPE rotation placement, (2) avoid overly burdening faculty and clinical partners, and (3) provide students with the opportunity to experience a pharmacy faculty perspective as a way to enhance exposure to academia as a potential future career. The objectives of this report are to describe the design and assessment of student and faculty experience for this team-taught academic-focused APPE.

Materials and methods

A team of eight faculty members (six from the main campus and two from the satellite campus) in the

Department of Pharmacy Practice developed a six-week academic-focused APPE to provide a large group of PharmD students with a broad introduction to academia. While none of the eight faculty members had previously participated in an academic APPE, this diverse group included one professor, two associate professors, and five assistant professors with a range of two–ten years of experience in pharmacy academia. Representing a variety of clinical settings, including ambulatory care and internal medicine, all faculty members had the equivalent of at least five years of clinical experience. Some had completed various levels of formal training in pedagogy, but this was not required for participation. Three of the faculty involved held administrative positions (Pharmacy Practice Department Chair, Pharmacy Practice Department Vice-Chair, and Associate Dean).

The initial course design occurred over a period of several months in which faculty met to discuss and create the overall course structure and materials (i.e., assignments, grading rubrics, and surveys). Individual faculty members divided the work of the course creation. At the conclusion of the course design process, intended learning outcomes for the APPE included the following:

1. Discuss current issues related to various academic pedagogies and controversies.
2. Describe the tripartite mission (teaching, scholarship, and service) of pharmacy faculty members.
3. Discuss the accreditation process for pharmacy programs and how those standards are functionalized in the daily operation of a pharmacy school.
4. Discuss the value and importance of leadership as a key element of a pharmacy faculty career.
5. Design and execute a teaching module (including material development, concept delivery, and assessment) in a face-to-face classroom setting.
6. Discuss Boyer’s definition of scholarship.¹³
7. Participate in the process of academic or clinical research, as needed.
8. Create a professional academic portfolio.

Course structure

This APPE took place concurrently on two campuses, with live content transmitted to the satellite campus via synchronous distance education technology. Each week, students participated in two live three-hour didactic seminars and one online module created in our school’s learning management system ([Appendix](#)). Selected session topics were based on their relation to the tripartite mission of academia, with teaching as a major focus, and scholarship and service as minor foci. The combination of live didactic seminars and online modules gave the APPE characteristics of a hybrid course. The weekly live didactic seminars were activity and discussion based, and the weekly online modules included discussion forums, posted readings,

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